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SUBJECT: US AND TURKEY REAFFIRM CT COOPERATION

REF: ANKARA 1033

Classified By: Acting DCM Daniel O'Grady for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Turkey is generally pleased with the U.S.-Turkey-Iraq Trilateral Process, but Iraq must take concrete measures against the PKK, Turkish officials told S/CT Amb. Benjamin during his July 30-31 visit. Turkey is developing a new broader "democratization" approach to the Kurdish issue in Turkey's southeast, and seeks to reintegrate Camp Makhmour residents in northern Iraq back into Turkish society once Iraqi authorities have ended PKK influence in the camp. Turkey will seek to reinvigorate the UNSC's Counter-Terrorism Committee when it assumes the chair in ¶2010. The U.S. information-sharing proposals are "still on the table," MFA DDG Ozyildiz reported, but in the meantime Turkey is willing to enhance current information-sharing mechanisms. Amb. Benjamin urged Turkey to reschedule DPM Cicek's U.S. visit at the earliest opportunity and to set a date for the new high-level bilateral CT dialogue. He thanked Turkey for its efforts with Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan and welcomed greater cooperation against al-Qa'eda and AQ-inspired terrorist groups. End summary.

¶2. (C) The State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, met July 31 with MFA Undersecretary Ertugrul Apakan to discuss counterterrorism (CT)-related issues, focusing on the PKK in northern Iraq, Turkey's role in the UN and its contributions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. They were joined by Ambassador Jeffrey and MFA Deputy Director General (DDG) for Security Affairs Inan Ozyildiz. The previous day, July 30, Amb. Benjamin and DDG Ozyildiz conducted a wide-ranging discussion of counterterrorism cooperation.

U/S Apakan

¶3. (C) Turkey is pleased with the Trilateral Process among Turkey, the United States and Iraq, U/S Apakan told Amb. Benjamin July 31, praising the distance it has covered so far, but also insisting that Iraq must now begin to take concrete measures against the PKK. Turkey would assume the chairmanship of the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2010, he observed, and was looking forward to using that forum as a platform to strengthen the UN's counterterrorism role. Ambassador Benjamin affirmed U.S.

desire to deepen its counterterrorism relationship with Turkey and to build capacity to fight terrorism among regional players. He emphasized the role multilateral organizations, such as the UN and NATO, can play in countering terrorist organizations, and expressed U.S. desire to strengthen their CT roles.

¶4. (C) The Undersecretary noted that Turkey would be establishing a new PRT in northern Afghanistan and that it had been working closely at political, military, and bureaucratic levels with Pakistan in order to bolster it against internal instability. Although the situation in both troubled countries has gotten "less bad," he felt there is a need for a broad, centrally coordinated socio-economic plan for the two countries. Benjamin expressed deep gratitude for Turkey's efforts in stabilizing Pakistan and Afghanistan and concurred with U/S Apakan that more and better coordination amongst the various actors in the two countries would be beneficial.

¶5. (C) U/S Apakan also pointed to Central Asia and the Caucasus as places the U.S. and the international community in general needs to engage more heavily. While those regions are not currently a problem, he sees the potential for both to develop serious terrorism concerns. Amb. Benjamin assured Apakan that he would be focusing on Central Asia and the Caucasus, pointing out that as terrorists begin to find Afghanistan and Pakistan to be more hostile environments, they will likely relocate to what are now relatively quiet regions.

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Bilateral Cooperation

¶6. (C) In his July 30 meeting with DDG Ozyildiz, Amb. Benjamin expressed the hope that Deputy Prime Minister Cicek would reschedule his postponed visit to Washington at the earliest opportunity. The U.S. places high priority on his visit and will arrange a "worthy schedule." The U.S. also hopes to schedule soon the new high-level bilateral dialogue; we look forward to broad interagency participation with a "whole of government" approach. Asked about the format, Benjamin suggested the two sides address the threat environment, areas on which they should focus, expertise or training they might offer each other, legal issues and information-sharing, and opportunities for cooperation in multilateral fora. Separately, Amb. Benjamin urged Turkey to send a delegation from Ankara to the August 4-5 Jordan Biometrics Partnership Conference. On the later issue, Ozyildiz explained that he had revisited the matter with Turkish National Police (TNP) colleagues the previous day, but offered no indication that the TNP had reconsidered its decision to let Turkey's embassy in Amman represent the GOT at the event.

U.S. Information Sharing Proposals

¶7. (C) In 2008, Ozyildiz noted, the U.S. proposed three separate information-sharing initiatives: TIP/PISCES, HSDP-6 and API/PNR. They had been shared with and studied by the relevant authorities. Some elements of the proposals created legal questions, but all three "remained on the table." In the meantime, the U.S. and Turkey could improve existing information-sharing mechanisms, he suggested. At the last GOT interagency meeting, ministries and intelligence agencies came to a common understanding that Turkey is ready to receive more specific information and to respond on a real-time basis. Amb. Benjamin welcomed greater Turkish cooperation in information sharing and expressed hope Turkey could work out any legal impediments to the new proposals. The U.S. side noted that the funding offer for TIP/PISCES had time constraints and that other countries were waiting to use the funds if Turkey did not respond positively by the end of September.

PKK - in Northern Iraq

18. (C) In an overview of Turkish CT activities, DDG Ozyildiz emphasized that Turkey values U.S. support and cooperation on all levels. Turkey is tackling radical leftists, separatists (i.e., the PKK) and al-Qa'eda-inspired religious groups. Its priority remains the PKK and its focus is on the PKK in northern Iraq. The Trilateral Process among Turkey, the U.S., and Iraq begun in November 2008 has been positive, but progress is slow, Ozyildiz remarked. Turkey expects its relations with Iraq to deepen, including through an upcoming visit of Iraqi ministers to Turkey and efforts to build ties between Iraq and Turkey's police forces. He recognized, however, that Iraq's capabilities are limited and that political tensions between Baghdad and Irbil are often a hindrance. Reiterating U/S Apakan's message of the previous day, he made it clear that Iraq must take more concrete measures to disrupt PKK logistical support and to provide real-time intelligence to Turkey to allow effective action. Turkey would prefer that Iraq handle the PKK on its own, and is willing to help them through information-sharing and training. However, Turkey has a right to defend its borders; barring Iraqi action, Turkey will take appropriate defensive action.

New Government Approach to PKK

19. (C) Turning to the Turkish government's new approach to PKK terrorism, Ozyildiz noted the government is aware of the roots of the PKK's appeal and is countering it with a broader "democratization" policy. Through it, the Turkish government would address legal, cultural, social, and economic issues to

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raise living standards and enlarge "democratic rights" among the Kurdish population. This would be a long process, he conceded, but the change in approach itself is positive. The active political participation of the Kurdish nationalist Democratic Society Party (DTP) is important in that it gives the Kurds an opportunity "to voice their aspirations in the political arena." Options being considered by the government include enlarging the rights and revenues of municipalities, and reforming education to accommodate Kurdish speakers. One initiative, Ozyildiz continued, would be a repentance law to bring "innocent terrorists" -- those who have not taken part in violent acts -- down from the mountains of northern Iraq and back into Turkish society.

110. (C) In this context, Ozyildiz mentioned UNHCR-administered Makhmour Camp in northern Iraq. Turkey is trying to find a formula for reintegrating the 1000-some families living in Makhmour -- many of whose members were born in Iraq -- into Turkish society legally and fairly. Turkey has sought detailed demographic information on the camps' inhabitants from UNHCR. Currently, the camp is "under PKK control" and used by PKK for R&R, he asserted. Turkey wants Iraqi authorities to end PKK control of the camp as a precondition to further Turkish steps to address a solution.

PKK in Europe

111. (C) Turkey values U.S. efforts to encourage European cooperation against the PKK, Ozyildiz stated. Counter-PKK efforts in Europe are focused on PKK financing, recruitment and propaganda, he observed. Although the EU recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization, the PKK is able to take advantage of differences in national laws. Despite Interpol warrants, some PKK leaders continue to enjoy asylum status and to move freely. He noted hopefully that EU Counterterrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove's recent report suggesting specific counter-PKK measures to individual countries. Amb. Benjamin pointed out that former S/CT Deputy Coordinator Schlicher had visited Brussels and Copenhagen in June specifically to press PKK-related issues and assured Ozyildiz the U.S. would continue to encourage our European partners to take more assertive actions against the PKK.

Al-Qa'eda and others International Terrorists

¶12. (C) DDG Ozyildiz expressed Turkey's willingness to work with the U.S. on requests concerning AQ and other AQ-inspired groups. The Turkish police keep an eye on groups it knows to follow violent radical ideology and arrests them when evidence shows they are beginning to train, plan, or arm. That willingness to cooperate on international terrorist threats extends to Turkish assistance in Afghanistan and Pakistan, he noted. Amb. Benjamin thanked Turkey for its assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the same time he noted U.S. concern that other AQ-inspired groups were using Turkey as a transit route. He knew Turkey was committed to dealing with them and hoped to deepen our cooperation in this area.

Radicalization and Sunni Extremism

¶13. (C) Asked by Amb. Benjamin what the U.S. and Turkey can do to counter-radicalization, especially Sunni extremism, Ozyildiz responded that he was not optimistic. The issue is rooted in political problems. Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan/Pakistan all contribute to radicalization, he opined. At the same time as pursuing political and military solutions, authorities must also pursue education, because some people still believe that all problems can be solved by religion. Sunni extremism in Iraq, he believed, would diminish as the central government strengthens.

Syria

¶14. (C) Amb. Benjamin thanked Turkey for its efforts to reintegrate Syria into the international community and to

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renounce its support of terrorist organizations. Ozyildiz noted in response that Syria "is ready," but has pride. Turkey must engage Syria. "They listen to us." The two countries have several mechanisms to exchange views, including the "Adana Process" through which they share information twice a year, especially on the PKK. They also have a joint commission on security issues through their MOIs. In addition, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) has proposed a high-level military council. Turkey always conveys U.S. messages to Syria, Ozyildiz assured, urging it not to behave in an unconstructive manner. It does the same with Iran, he noted.

Turkey's New Counterterrorism Structure

¶15. (C) A law to create a new CT structure would pass after parliament reconvenes, Ozyildiz explained. It would establish a second undersecretariat under the Minister of the Interior. This undersecretariat for public security would help coordinate the CT activities of the TGS, Jandarma, TNP, Turkish National Intelligence Organization (TNIO), MASAK (the financial intelligence unit) and MFA. He acknowledged resistance from TGS, TNIO and Jandarma to this new mechanism.

Efforts in International Fora

¶16. (C) DDG Ozyildiz reminded Amb. Benjamin that MFA U/S Apakan will become Turkey's new Permanent Representative to the UN and that Turkey will take the helm of the UN's CTC in ¶2010. Turkey plans to use the CTC as a platform for strengthening multinational efforts to combat al-Qa'eda and other international terrorist groups. In particular, Turkey is going to push for better application of the "extradite or prosecute" standard, and will work to advance the Comprehensive Anti-Terrorism Treaty. Amb. Benjamin said the U.S. shares Turkey's views on the value of international fora in combating terrorism. "We will reengage," he stated. The U.S. also welcomes Turkey as chair of the CTC and is committed to the Comprehensive Treaty.

The Obama Administration's CT Approach

¶17. (C) Invited to elaborate on the Obama administration's approach to CT, Amb. Benjamin said we see CT work as a collaborative effort and will pay particular attention to the concerns of our partners. The President is deeply concerned that CT actions not be counterproductive and that we use our "tool box" in a way that does not contribute to radicalization. The U.S. will also give high priority to countering violent extremism, and to finding "credible voices" in the region who can speak with authority. In that regard, we hope to identify "best practices" in de-radicalization. The U.S. will also stress capacity building, particularly with and through other partners and organizations, and continue to strengthen efforts to halt terrorist financing, Benjamin stressed.

The Turkish Diaspora in Europe

¶18. (C) Amb. Benjamin noted instances of Germans of Turkish origin and Turks living in Germany traveling to the FATA, and asked about the role of the Turkish Diaspora in radicalization. Ozyildiz commented that such people often suffered from alienation; isolated in a strange country, they were frequently more conservative than Turks in Turkey and thus open to radicalization. To counter this, Turkey sends government-paid imams to preach in mosques and supports Turkish community centers. It also encourages Turks to integrate into local society. Turkey's dialogue on these issues with European countries is improving and, with the exception of Germany and Austria, it is now generally easier to obtain citizenship or dual nationality. Separately, the Turkish Islamicist group, Milli Gurus, is moving closer to the mainstream in France and in some places even cooperates with authorities, he noted.

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¶19. (C) S/CT Amb. Benjamin has cleared this message.

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